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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Powerful Winter Storms Cause Damage to Mount Rogers National Recreation Area

Marion, Va - The Mount Rogers National Recreation Area was affected by powerful winter storms in January and February, toppling thousands of trees, severely damaging roads and trails, and clogging culverts and ditches. Several forest roads and trails are temporarily closed, and hundreds of miles of trails remain unsurveyed for damage. Some trail closures may be in effect until repairs can be made.

While high winds and heavy snow was especially damaging to trees, the storms did not cause extensive damage to structures. "We were fortunate to not suffer extensive facility damage from the storms, however routine winter maintenance and repair work is yet to begin," said Area Ranger Beth Merz. "Because our employees spent significant time clearing storm damage, some facilities will open much later in the season than usual."

"We have spent several weeks making repairs and cleaning up storm damage, but a great deal of work remains," said Merz. In addition to forest seasonal road closures, Forest Road 643 (Barton Gap Road) is closed until further notice. Seasonally closed campgrounds such as Ravens Cliff and Comers Rock may be delayed beyond their usual spring opening due to public safety concerns. Hussy Mountain Horse Camp is scheduled to reopen prior to the July 4 holiday.

For information on camping and hiking on the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, including specific road and trail conditions, please call 1-276-783-5196 or 1-800-628-7202.

The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.